United Nations S/PRST/2000/41

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 December 2000

Original: English

Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 4252nd meeting of the Security Council, held on 21 December 2000, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Guinea following recent attacks along its borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council expresses its deep concern at developments on the border that Guinea shares with Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"The Security Council condemns in the strongest terms the recent incursions into Guinea by rebel groups coming from Liberia and Sierra Leone that have affected villages and towns along the entire length of Guinea's border, including in Gueckedou on 6 December 2000 and in Kissidougou on 10 December 2000. The Council deplores the fact that these attacks claimed many lives, in particular the lives of civilians, and caused an exodus of local inhabitants and refugees, further exacerbating an already grave humanitarian situation. The Council also condemns the recent looting of the facilities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations. The Council demands an immediate halt to all acts of violence, especially those directed against civilians, as well as the infiltration of displaced persons camps by armed elements, and that those responsible for the violations of international humanitarian law be brought to justice.

"The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Guinea. It expresses its serious concern, in this regard, over reports that external military support is being provided to these rebel groups. It calls on all States, particularly Liberia, to refrain from providing any such military support and from any act that might contribute to further destabilization of the situation on the borders between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Council further calls upon all States in the region to prevent armed individuals from using their national territory to prepare and commit attacks in neighbouring countries.

"The Security Council notes with interest the common undertakings assumed by Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone at the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held in Bamako on 15 and 16 December 2000 (S/2000/1201, annex) and calls upon them to implement those undertakings fully and without

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delay. It again pays tribute to the current Chairman of ECOWAS and to that organization for the important role they play towards restoring peace and security to the three countries of the Mano River Union. The Council requests the Secretary-General to consider what support the international community, and in particular the United Nations, might provide to ECOWAS in order to ensure security on the border that Guinea shares with Liberia and Sierra Leone, and to report in that connection to the Council as soon as possible. The Council supports the appeal made by the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS for an urgent meeting of the Heads of State of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone under the auspices of ECOWAS and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

"The Security Council expresses deep appreciation for the Government of Guinea for hosting a large number of refugees. The Council is concerned by the growing hostile attitude among the local population towards refugees, and urges the Government of Guinea to take urgent measures to discourage the propagation of such anti-refugee feelings.

"The Security Council expresses its deep concern over the fate of all those who continue to live in a state of insecurity, especially the local populations and the tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. It urges all the competent organizations to ensure that humanitarian relief continues, and it underlines the importance of integrated action by the United Nations agencies, acting in coordination with the Government of Guinea and with the support of ECOWAS. The Council believes that humanitarian assistance in secure locations must be made available not only to displaced refugees and Guineans, but also to those refugees returning to Sierra Leone. The Council calls on the Secretary-General and UNHCR to ensure that suitable programmes of reintegration and assistance exist and are enhanced where security permits in Sierra Leone. It also recognizes the important role of the international community and the competent non-governmental organizations in providing the humanitarian relief which the local populations, the refugees and the displaced persons so sorely need. The Council is concerned over the security of humanitarian personnel working in Sierra Leone and Guinea. It calls on all the parties concerned to facilitate the work of the humanitarian organizations. It urges the parties to guarantee the security of refugees and displaced persons, and the security of the staff of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations. The Council also reaffirms the need to respect the civilian character of refugee camps.

"The Security Council welcomes the proposed Inter-Agency multidisciplinary mission to West Africa, supports its earliest possible departure to the region and looks forward to its report and recommendations."